

NEWS RELEASE

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Carol A. Murray, Commissioner

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Contacts:

Eugene Sawyer
Bridge Maintenance Bureau
(603) 271-3667
Bill Boynton
Public Information Office
(603) 271-6495

LENGTHY CLOSURE LIKELY FOR SARAH LONG BRIDGE IN PORTSMOUTH
MAJOR UNDERWATER POWER CABLE FAILURE MAY REQUIRE LIFT BRIDGE
TO BE CLOSED TO MOTOR VEHICLE TRAFFIC FOR UP TO FIVE MONTHS

A major failure of an underwater electrical cable is expected to force the closure of the Sarah Mildred Long Bridge carrying the US Route 1 Bypass over the Piscataqua River between Portsmouth, NH and Kittery, ME to motor vehicle traffic for a period of up to five months. The lift bridge experienced the power outage on Saturday, October 28. Utilizing a portable generator, the bridge was lifted to the raised position on Tuesday, October 31 to allow for the resumption of vital river traffic by large ships.

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) has determined the damage is below the waterline in a submarine cable that carries DC electrical current to power key bridge lift motors on the northern and southern sides of the bridge. Restoring the bridge to normal operations will require replacing the specialized cable, which is expected to take up to 120 days to manufacture. Repairs could then take up to an additional 30 days. The estimated cost of the repair project is \$1 million.

“We recognize that leaving the Sarah Long Bridge in the raised position for a long period of time will present an significant inconvenience to motorists and some businesses in the Portsmouth area,” says NHDOT Commissioner Carol Murray. “Unfortunately, this is not an easy problem to fix. Working with the Maine Department of Transportation, we will do everything we can to expedite the repairs and minimize the impact as much as possible.”

Signed detours will continue to guide motorists to the Interstate 95 and Memorial Bridges (US Route 1). Construction work is underway on a turnaround near Albacore Park on the Route 1 Bypass that will allow vehicles to more easily access businesses along the highway. The turnaround is expected to be completed and open to traffic this Saturday (11/4).

Built in 1940, the Sarah Mildred Long Bridge has carried an average of approximately 11,000 vehicles a day across the Piscataqua River,